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# THE WELL WORKPLACE®

## HEALTHLETTER



A Publication Of  
The Wellness  
Council Of America



HEALTH INFORMATION PRESENTED AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDED ON IT



### Tips To Getting A Good Night's Sleep

- ✓ Keep a regular sleep and wake schedule.
- ✓ Avoid caffeine and cigarettes in the late afternoon and don't drink alcohol to help you sleep.
- ✓ Avoid going to bed on either a full or an empty stomach.
- ✓ Use your bedroom primarily for sleeping. Sleep in a dark, quiet, well-ventilated space with a comfortable temperature.
- ✓ Relax before going to bed. Take a warm bath, listen to soothing music, meditate or try relaxation or breathing exercises.
- ✓ Face your clock away from the bed to avoid focusing on time if you awake before morning.
- ✓ If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes of going to bed, or you wake early and can't get back to sleep, get out of bed and try a relaxing activity such as reading until you become drowsy.
- ✓ Regular exercise can help improve certain sleep disorders. However, don't exercise within 2 hours of bedtime.
- ✓ Avoid household chores, paperwork or other stimulating activities for at least 2 hours before bedtime.
- ✓ Use over-the-counter or prescription sleep aids only for short periods of time and under the direction of your doctor. Some sleep aids can make you drowsy during the day and cause other side effects.

## Are Your Wrists **AT RISK?**

### Learn About Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

You're working at your desk, but you're distracted by a tingling or numbness in your hand and wrist. Then a sharp, piercing pain shoots from your palm through your arm. If you've had symptoms like these for several days—or worse, weeks—or if they keep you up at night, you may have carpal tunnel syndrome.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is caused by a nerve getting pinched inside a narrow passageway—called the carpal tunnel—in your wrist. The rigid tunnel is made of bones and ligament. It surrounds several tendons and an important nerve, called the median nerve, which detects feelings in your thumb and fingers (except for the little finger). The median nerve also helps to control certain hand movements.

Several factors can increase pressure inside the carpal tunnel and squeeze the median nerve. A wrist injury can cause tendons to swell and press against the nerve. Arthritis, diabetes, thyroid disease, pregnancy and menopause can also contribute to swelling and pain. Some people are more likely to get carpal tunnel syndrome simply because they were born with smaller carpal tunnels. Sometimes the cause is unknown.

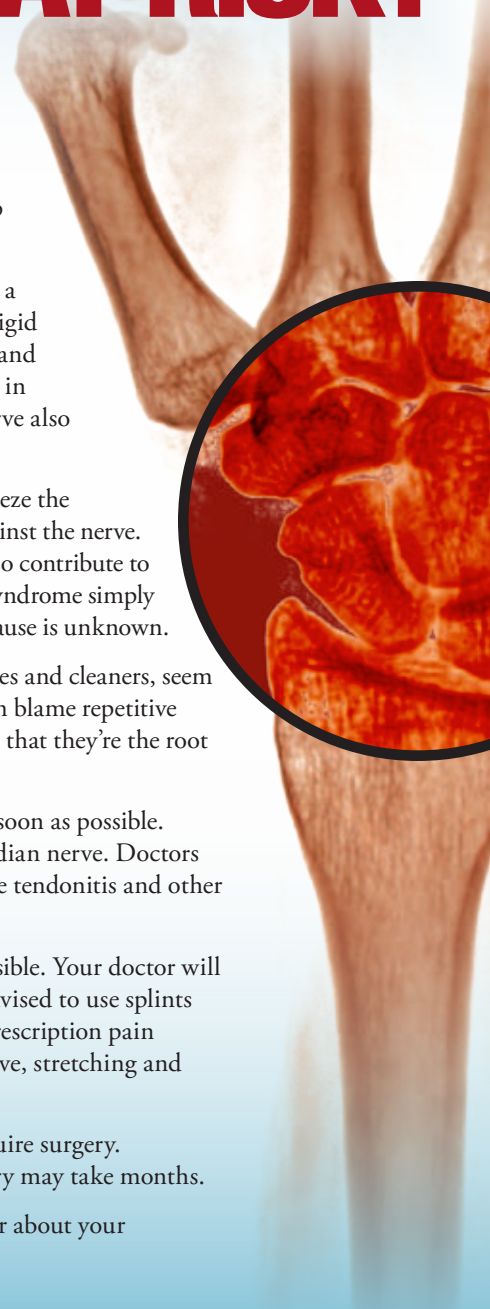
People who work on assembly lines, such as meat packers, seamstresses and cleaners, seem more likely to get carpal tunnel syndrome. But although people often blame repetitive hand or wrist movements for the disorder, there's little solid evidence that they're the root cause. Repetitive movements may simply make symptoms worse.

If you suspect you have carpal tunnel syndrome, see your doctor as soon as possible. Early treatment is important to avoid permanent damage to the median nerve. Doctors sometimes use simple tests to rule out other causes of wrist pain, like tendonitis and other disorders caused by repeated hand and wrist motions.

Treatments for carpal tunnel syndrome should begin as soon as possible. Your doctor will treat underlying causes like diabetes or arthritis first. You may be advised to use splints or a hand brace to keep your wrist from twisting or bending. Nonprescription pain relievers may help to ease pain and swelling. Once symptoms improve, stretching and strengthening exercises may help to prevent future trouble.

Severe cases, with symptoms lasting for 6 months or more, may require surgery. Symptoms often improve immediately after surgery, but full recovery may take months.

If you have carpal tunnel syndrome, be sure to talk with your doctor about your treatment options.



# CHUCKWAGON Coleslaw

## Measure Ingredients

### DRESSING

3 tbsp	nonfat sour cream
3 tbsp	fat-free mayonnaise
3 tbsp	rice vinegar
2 tbsp	Dijon mustard
2 ½ tsp	Splenda Granular
1 tsp	caraway seed
¼ tsp	black pepper
	salt (optional)

### COLESLAW

2 cups	green cabbage, shredded
½ cup	red cabbage, chopped
½ cup	carrots, peeled and grated
½ cup	red onion, minced
½ cup	apple, chopped
½ cup	jicama, shredded
1 tsp	fajita seasoning

## Preparation

In a small bowl, combine sour cream, mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, Splenda, caraway seed, black pepper and salt, if desired. Mix well. Toss together the cabbages, carrots, onion, apple and jicama in a large salad bowl. Add dressing and toss until mixed well. Serve chilled. Dust with paprika or fajita seasoning.

## Nutrition

Calories 29 (From fat 2), Total Fat 0g (Sat 0g), Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 81mg, Total Carbohydrate 7g, Dietary Fiber 1g, Sugars 3g, Protein 1g

## Number of Servings

10



ABOUT **Richard Collins MD**

**Dr. Richard Collins**, a leading authority and speaker on the prevention and reversal of heart disease, emphasizes the connection between eating well and living long. His delicious low-fat recipes have been shared with millions through his cookbook, videos, and his nationally-renowned cooking seminars. For more information, visit Dr. Collins' website at [www.thecookingcardiologist.com](http://www.thecookingcardiologist.com).

A HEALTHY RECIPE BY **RICHARD COLLINS, MD**

# Leaner Meaner BURGER



## LEANER MEANER BURGER

### Measure Ingredients

4	baby portobello mushrooms
4 tsp	blue cheese or reduced-fat cheese of choice
½ lb	buffalo steak, ground
1 cup	soy-based meat substitute or 2 frozen soy burger patties, thawed and crumbled
1 tbsp	Worcestershire sauce
	salt and black pepper, to taste
4	slices whole-wheat bread
	Garnish and season as desired

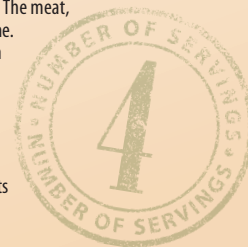
### Nutritional Analysis

Calories 218 (From fat 51), Total Fat 6g (Sat 2g)  
Cholesterol 22mg, Sodium 460mg, Total Carbohydrate 18g  
Dietary Fiber 4g, Sugars 3g, Protein 23g

### Preparation

*Note that the percentage of the soy burger to ground meat is equivalent. To make a larger batch, simply use equal portions of ground meat and soy.*

Prepare the baby portabellas by removing stem and gills; use a spoon to shave the inside of the mushroom to the flesh. Place one teaspoon of cheese into the cleaned portobello cup. In a bowl, thoroughly mix the ground buffalo meat, the meat substitute or soy burgers, Worcestershire sauce and salt and pepper to taste. Firmly pack the meat mixture into the portobello caps. Grill with the meat side down on medium heat. Grill with the lid down, to allow the portobello to roast. Turn once to create grill marks on the outside of the mushroom cap. Check with a cooking thermometer, bringing the inside temperature of the meat to at least 160°. Do not judge if it is done by color, as the soy addition is naturally dark. The meat, as always in a hamburger, should be well done. Using a cookie cutter, cut four round circles in the whole-wheat bread. Toast on grill or in a toaster. Serve open-faced by placing the stuffed portobello onto the toasted bread. The whole-wheat bread forms the bottom of the portobello burger; the lid is the portobello mushroom. Serve with condiments of choice—onions, sauce, lettuce, extra cheese, etc.





# DO WHAT MOVES YOU

## PUSH PAST YOUR OBSTACLES AND GET ACTIVE!

People come up with lots of reasons to avoid physical activity. They feel too tired, too busy, too out of shape, too old... and the list goes on. But these obstacles pale in comparison to the many benefits of boosting your activity, even by a modest amount. Regardless of your age, gender or athletic ability, physical activity can enrich your health and well-being.

What can physical activity do for you? Coupled with a healthy diet, it can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. It can help prevent or delay the onset of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and some types of cancer. Your overall well-being may brighten as well, because physical activity can help you reduce stress, gain energy, sleep better, and fight depression and anxiety.

Some physical activities—such as weight-bearing exercises like jogging, tennis and weight lifting—can also help you build and maintain healthy muscle and bone. That's important at any age, but especially critical for older adults.

Experts recommend that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week. Moderate-intensity activities make you breathe harder and make it more difficult to talk, but you should still be able to carry on a conversation. Children and adolescents need double what adults do. If weight loss is your goal, aim for at least an hour of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity each day.

If you're reluctant to get physically active, think about the top three hurdles you face. Write them down, then list possible solutions. If expense is a concern, choose free activities like walking around parks or nature trails. If weather is an obstacle, consider walking around the mall or working out with fitness videos at home.

If the demands of family, friends and work leave you pressed for time, add physical activity to your daily routine. Try taking lunchtime walks, using the stairs instead of the elevator or enjoying an evening stroll around the neighborhood. Even everyday chores, like household cleaning and yard work, can get you moving.

Some people prefer structured exercise. No matter what kind of physical activities you choose, be sure to include some that are fun. Maybe you'd enjoy dancing, gardening or bike riding. Pick whatever activities fit your schedule, and set your plan in motion.

## Tips To Ease Your Way Into A Physically Active Life

- ♥ If you're concerned, ask your physician what type and amount of physical activity is right for you.
- ♥ Start slowly. Work up to daily physical activities of 30 minutes to improve health, 60 minutes to lose weight and 60-90 minutes to help maintain weight loss.
- ♥ Ask family and friends to join you, and make it fun. Form walking groups with co-workers, play with your children outside or take a dance class with friends.
- ♥ Choose a variety of activities to prevent boredom and keep your mind and body challenged.
- ♥ Listen to your body. Consult your physician if you experience chest discomfort, dizziness, severe headache or other unusual symptoms.
- ♥ Keep an activity log to track your progress. Note when and how long you worked out, what activity you did and how you felt during your workout.
- ♥ Set both short-term and long-term goals to keep motivated.
- ♥ Set rewards. Celebrate every success—you earned it!



# The Need

## WAKE UP TO THE RISKS OF

**Do you toss and turn at night, or have problems falling asleep or staying asleep?** Do you have trouble staying awake and alert during the day? If so, you may be one of the estimated 50-70 million Americans who have a sleep disorder. Experts estimate that about one-third of adult Americans will experience some sort of sleep disorder in their life time. And, while many sleep disorders can be treated, most of them go undiagnosed.

Why we sleep remains something of a mystery. Dr. Michael Twery, director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research at the National Institutes of Health Heart, Lung and Blood Institute says, "Sleep originates with the timing of our biological clock. The biological clock operates in almost all of our tissues." A particular region of the brain called the suprachiasmatic nucleus, Twery says, operates as the master biological clock. It orchestrates what he calls a "symphony" of hormones and other changes that prepare our body for sleep.

There is also what Twery calls the "unseen side" of inadequate sleep. Because the timing of sleep is linked to a symphony of chemical reactions throughout the body, Twery explains, it's also linked to our health in more subtle ways. "When these chemical reactions become misaligned," he says, "they can contribute to problems with our metabolism and our cardiovascular system, and can eventually lead to increased risk of disease."

Studies have found that people who get less sleep tend to have higher rates of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. A great deal of research is now focused on understanding the underlying links between sleep and these health factors.

It's clear that our body needs sleep, because of what happens when we don't get enough of it. "Too little sleep or not enough restorative sleep can seriously affect the way we think, behave, form memories and perform at work and school," explains Dr. Merrill Mitler, program director for sleep research at NIH's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "A continued lack of sleep also puts us at risk for mood disorders such as depression and can lead to poor concentration and poor judgment, social problems, greater risk of car crashes and increased risk of substance abuse."

How much sleep do we need? Adults usually need at least 7-8 hours of sleep a night to feel fully rested when they are awake. School-aged children and teens need at least 9 hours. Children in preschool need between 10 and 12 hours a day, and newborns need 16-18 hours.

Many people unfortunately consider sleep a low priority and try to stay awake as much as they can to do more work, watch some TV or fit other things into their busy days. But others can't sleep because of an underlying problem. In fact, there are more than 70 different types of sleep disorders.

Researchers continue to explore the causes and consequences of sleep problems such as insomnia, chronic sleep deprivation and obstructive sleep apnea. However, even if all these disorders aren't fully understood, many of them can be treated.

If you frequently experience excessive daytime sleepiness or have problems sleeping, talk to your doctor or a sleep specialist. Mitler recommends that before you go, you should keep a sleep diary of when you usually go to bed, how long it takes you to fall asleep, when and how many times you wake during the night, and when you wake in the morning. The diary should also include what you ate that day, drinks you had at night containing caffeine or alcohol, use of medicines, smoking and any exercise you've done. The records may show a pattern or give the doctor other clues to better diagnose your condition.

# For Sleep

SHORTENED SLUMBER





# Of Air & Asthma

## AIR POLLUTION'S EFFECTS

**A growing number of Americans are sniffing and suffering with allergies and asthma.** Several studies have shown that air pollution and indoor allergens make asthma symptoms worse and can bring on an asthma attack. If you're one of the 23 million Americans who suffer from asthma, you might get some relief by taking steps to reduce indoor allergen levels and modifying your lifestyle to avoid the ill effects of air pollution.

Asthma is caused by swelling and inflammation of your airways. When the airways narrow, less air gets through to your lungs, causing wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble breathing.

Children with a family history of allergies and asthma are more likely to have asthma. Exposure to triggers in the environment, including allergens, pollutants and viral infections, also play a role. "The rapid increase in asthma cases from the late 1970s cannot be attributed to genetics alone," says Dr. Peter Gergen, medical officer at NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. "Changes in the environment, home surroundings and exposure to infections have also contributed to the prevalence of asthma."

Understanding what makes asthma worse can help asthma sufferers keep their disease in check. NIH research has shown that children who live in inner cities are exposed to higher levels of allergens from dust mites, dogs, cats, rodents, cockroaches and mold in their homes. A recent study found that people with asthma and allergies may be able to alleviate asthma symptoms by reducing allergen levels in their homes.

"Some simple measures—washing bedding in hot water, vacuuming and steam-cleaning, and using high-efficiency particulate air purifiers (HEPA) and mattress and pillow covers that do not allow allergens to pass through—can decrease the levels of household allergens," Gergen says.

But what if the air outside your home is filled with asthma triggers? A new two-year study supported by NIH and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) showed that even modestly increased levels of air pollution cause more frequent asthma symptoms and lower lung function in children who have persistent asthma and live in inner city areas of the United States. Even air pollution levels within EPA's safety standards made asthma worse in vulnerable children.



### If You Have Asthma

**Avoid outdoor activities in the afternoons on warmer days, when the risk of air pollution is highest.**

**Avoid strenuous outdoor activities if the air is polluted. Check your region's air quality index, which is often reported in the local news. Orange and red mean it's a bad air day and that children and adults with respiratory diseases should avoid the outdoors. Purple and maroon mean air pollution is extreme and everyone should try to stay inside.**

High levels of nitrogen dioxide, a component of motor vehicle emissions, had the greatest effect in the study, leading to many asthma-related school absences. Past research has also shown that ozone and particle pollution can affect asthma. Ozone, which is found in smog, is worse on hot days, especially in the afternoons and early evenings. Particle pollution, found in smoke and dust, is bad near busy roads and factories or when there's smoke in the air.

Researchers are studying different approaches to prevent and treat asthma. Asthma can't be cured, but most people with asthma can control it and live active lives. Talk to your doctor about developing a plan to manage your asthma symptoms.

# creating a **Personal** health record

You may have health information in lots of places—at home, or in doctor or hospital records. Personal health records (PHRs) are confidential, easy-to-use tools that can help you manage your health information. PHRs may be an easier way for you to keep all your health information—like doctor or hospital visits, allergies, shots, or a list of your medicines—in one place.

Having a PHR can help you provide more complete information to your health care providers or family members. With all of your health information in one place, you may be able to avoid unnecessary procedures or tests. You may also be able to provide critical information about your health in a medical emergency.

A personal health record may help you save time and money, and improve the quality of care you get from your health care visits.

You can keep track of personal health information such as:

- ✓ Your health care providers and their contact information
- ✓ Your primary insurance company
- ✓ Medications and allergies
- ✓ Emergency contacts and numbers
- ✓ Family and personal health history
- ✓ Vital statistics such as BMI, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, etc.

In addition to keeping all of your information in one place, PHRs make it easier for you to do the following:

- ✓ Order prescription refills online
- ✓ Schedule appointments
- ✓ Record helpful information on things that matter to you, like diabetes or high blood pressure

There are many types of PHRs, including electronic versions supplied or sold through a health care provider. With an electronic PHR, you may be able to get to your information anywhere and anytime you have access to the Internet. Some PHRs simply provide a way for you to enter your own information. Other PHRs provide more services, such as making it possible for your pharmacy or doctor's office to add information electronically. Some PHRs may charge a fee for their services. Talk to your doctor, other health care provider, or someone from your health plan to learn more about the PHR options available to you.



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# Preparing For Your Doctor Visit

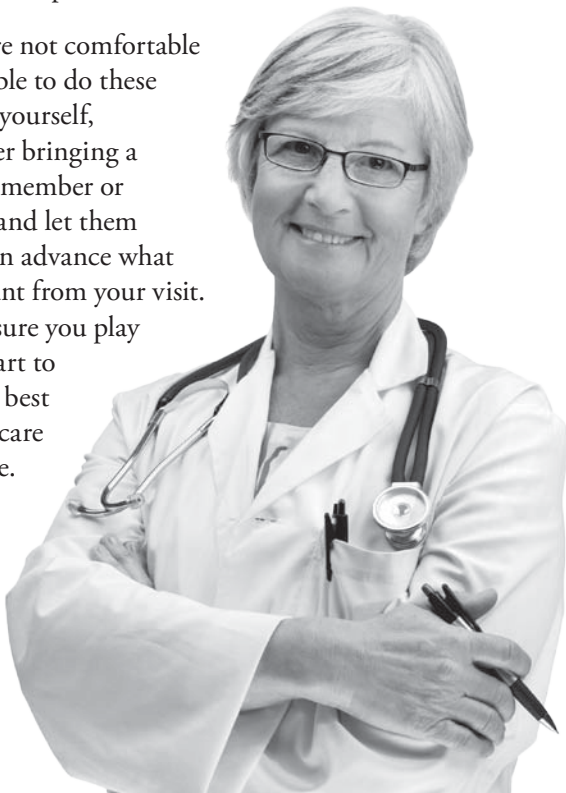
You get ready for a date. You prepare for meetings and presentations at work. But most people don't think to prepare for visits to the doctor. If you're one of them, you're missing out on an important way to help ensure you get the best possible health care.

The first step is good communication, and that entails finding a doctor you feel comfortable talking with. Talking about your health means sharing information about how you feel, both physically and emotionally. Having a good relationship with your main, or primary, doctor is one of the best ways to ensure your good health. This doctor knows you and your particular health history. He or she can help you make medical decisions that suit your values and can guide you toward other medical specialists and health care providers you may need.

A basic plan for your visit can also help. Before going to the doctor, make a list of the things you want to discuss. Think about how you're going to describe your symptoms. Put your questions in order so you're sure to ask about the most important ones first.

During your visit, make sure you understand what the medical tests you are getting are for. When a doctor makes a diagnosis, make sure you understand your condition and fully discuss your treatment options.

If you're not comfortable or unable to do these things yourself, consider bringing a family member or friend and let them know in advance what you want from your visit. Make sure you play your part to get the best health care possible.



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## INTERACTIVE MINDS

### Tips For Talking With Your Doctor

- ✓ Give information. Don't wait to be asked!
- ✓ You know important things about your symptoms and your health history. Tell your doctor what you think he or she needs to know even if it makes you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.
- ✓ Bring a personal health record with you, and keep it up to date.
- ✓ Always bring a list of the medicines and dietary supplements you're taking and include how often you take them, what strength, and any allergies or reactions you've had.
- ✓ Ask questions, or your doctor may think you understand everything that was said.
- ✓ Write down a few important questions before your visit to make sure they get asked and answered.
- ✓ Take notes or ask for written instructions and information to take home with you.
- ✓ If you have questions, call.